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ABSTRACT

A cooperative professional evaluation system developed by the Southwest Cook County (Illinois) Cooperative Association for Special Education is described. The development of the system is outlined including writing of generic and specific job descriptions and determination of a philosophy of evaluation which identified the following purposes: improving special education, identifying areas of growth for each professional, and aiding administrative decisions. The final process involves a pass-fail rating system for basic competencies, a specific remedial program for teachers who do not achieve the acceptable rating, and an individual self-evaluation in which supervisors and the individual identify areas of growth and areas needing attention for the following year. The system accomplishes such objectives as reduction of morale problems caused by the previous norm-referenced/comparative system, focus on staff improvement, and consistency with the human resources model of supervision. (DB)

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Evaluation: A Cooperative Process

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Evaluation: A Cooperative Process

The most difficult aspect of the teacher evaluation process is the fact that it has evolved into a normative referenced, comparative system. Promptly following summative conferences, teachers commence to query one another regarding the number of superior or outstanding ratings they were awarded by the chief evaluator. The comparison frequently and predictably causes unrest and poor morale in the teachers lounge that permeates the entire school environment. Teacher evaluation then becomes a hygiene rather that a motivator in Herzberg's model (Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson, and Capwell, 1957). Dissatisfaction results, motivation is thwarted, and instructional improvement takes a back seat. The challenge for educators then is how to reverse this phenomena. The evaluation system engineered by collaborating administrator-practitioner teams must somehow assist all practitioners to move the accomplishments of education forward via the human resources model described by Sergioviani and Staratt(1983). Proponents of the human resources model convincingly assert that this progress will be realized only by professional staff members who are achieving their own potential, making themselves successful by contributing to the state of the art in some predetermined manner. Only when the human resources model of supervision is inculcated into every facet of the system will we realize the potential demanded in A Nation At Risk (1983) and other assorted documentaries. The concerns about evaluation and the questions raised previously were recently fodder for discussion by an evaluation committee at the Southwest Cook County Cooperative Association for Special Education (SWCASE). Administrators, supervisors and teachers comprised the team.

The committee members first looked in depth at the research on professional evaluations. Dozens of forms and processes from both the public and private sectors were appraised. Critical components were identified and prioritized. It was determined that revised and more accurate job descriptions would be requisite to the new evaluation process. A sub-committee of eleven professionals representing various exceptionalities and positions was formed to do this extensive work. They returned to the Evaluation Committee with job descriptions that were both generic regarding special education and specific regarding the duties of the job assignment of the individual.

Upon receipt of the job descriptions the Evaluation Committee's next step in developing the new evaluation process at Southwest Cooperative was to write a philosophy. In this process, the purposes of evaluation were outlined as follows:

- to continue to improve the quality of special education and related services
- to identify strengths and areas of growth for each professional
- to provide a critical basis for administrative decisions

These philosophical purposes formed the foundation for all the committee's future decisions.

In keeping with the philosophical statement addressing the "improvement of instructional services", the committee designed a goal setting component entitled "Professional Growth Plan". Professionals were asked to choose at least one professional development activity which was consistent with the annually established overall Direction Statements of the Cooperative. The growth activity selected was discussed with the program supervisor in advance to insure it contributed to the accomplishment of one of the Cooperative annual Direction Statements. As a result of this articulation between supervisor and teacher, the entire goal orientation of the Cooperative was streamlined. The Cooperative Direction Statements were determined to achieve overall Cooperative objectives and then through the vehicle of the "Professional Growth" component the teacher's energies were channeled to directly advance the system's annually established goals -- the essence of the human resources model.

Following targeted goals for professional growth, formal observations and building administrative feedback were incorporated to provide a formal basis for the summative evaluation. Through these interactions, the building administrator and special education supervisor provided the teacher with very specific encouragement and/or suggestions three times during the evaluation cycle. These input sessions also were formal opportunities for securing the professionals' perceptions prior to the summative evaluation.

The initial summative evaluation system proposed by the Evaluation Committee was composed of both trait-type (competencies included) and individual goal setting ingredients. The normative reference five point rating culprits were replaced with a pass-fail rating system. Since most teachers were dedicated professionals who gave 110% to serving students well, their dedication was generally reflected in the fact that most achieve basic expectancies necessary to the system's operation. A rating of acceptable was thus common reducing the opportunities for teacher comparisons.

For the small percentage of teachers who did not achieve the acceptable rating on the basic competencies, a specific remedial program was designed. This program includes guidance from supervisors and master teachers and a specifically formulated list of objectives which must be accomplished within designated timelines. The staff member's progress was reviewed on a regular basis with employment recommendations made to the Board of Education within the year.

The evaluation process was concluded with individual self-evaluation whereby the individual with supervisors input identify the individual's two strongest areas of growth and two areas requiring attention which would be expanded in the "Professional Growth Plan" for the following year. Thus individuals who chose to compare evaluations could discuss their choices for strengths and/or growths rather than number of ratings. This section then served as a "motivator" according to Herzberg's model.

In summary, the system accomplishes these objectives:

1. It reduces potential morale problems caused by the norm-referenced/comparative system in which teachers compare ratings.

2. It focuses on staff improvement via a criterion referenced model.

3. It is truly an individualized, personalized system which allows a teacher to maximize his/her potential and improve his/her instructional skills.

4. It is synergistic in the sense that the system evolves toward greater productivity as all of its members are cooperatively joining forces, each sharing in the accomplishment of over-all system goals.

5. It encourages articulation between teachers and supervisors in a constructive, goal oriented manner. It is consistent with a clinical model of supervision.

6. It replaces hygienes (dissatisfiers - comparative ratings) with motivators (goal achievement, recognition, self-actualization).

7. It is consistent with the human resources model of supervision which results in a humane, goal-oriented system of education because each member of the system is working toward self-actualization.

When system members begin to orient themselves in a positive self-directed manner because they want to, the process of educating students evolves toward more efficient and purposeful means.

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